Background Paper

CANADIAN INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

Number 2

January 1986

A NUCLEAR FREEZE?

by David Cox

INTRODUCTION

Several versions of proposals for a comprehensive freeze on the production, development and deployment of nuclear warheads and their delivery systems were again on the agenda of the United Nations General Assembly in 1985. In November, President Reagan and Soviet leader Gorbachev met in Geneva to discuss, amongst other things, the arms control issues which are at the heart of their differences.

They probably gave little attention to the freeze, notwithstanding the fact that one of the freeze resolutions before the United Nations was sponsored by the Soviet Union, and, indeed, notwithstanding the tide of support for the freeze that swept across the United States and Western Europe in 1982 and 1983. The comprehensive freeze proposals appear to have been successfully by-passed, at least as far as the United States is concerned.

What happened to the freeze proposal? Perhaps more than any other idea since the 1950s, it appeared to offer a cogent, realistic 'instruction' which citizens could provide to their governments. Moreover, the freeze proposal itself was eminently understandable — the momentum of the arms race must be stopped in much the same way as a train must halt before it can be reversed. It commanded the support of distinguished and experienced people, including some former high-level officials in Washington. And finally, it provided a common point around which concerned citizens in the peace movement could join their concerns and hope to influence their governments.

THE DEBATE IN THE UNITED STATES

". . . the United States and the Soviet Union should stop the nuclear arms race."

This simple, stark message introduced the *Call to Halt the Nuclear Arms Race*, a resolution drafted in March 1980 by Randall Forsberg of the Institute for Defense and Disarmament Studies in Boston. For several years thereafter, the *Call* served as the rallying point for a rapidly growing coalition of peace groups and civic organizations in the United States. The *Call* demanded "a mutual freeze on the testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons and of missiles and of new aircraft designed primarily to deliver nuclear weapons." In the years ahead, and in various forms, it was carried into the Congress, into the domestic political debates of the allies of the United States, including Canada, and, repeatedly, into the United Nations. It is hardly an exaggeration, therefore, to say that throughout the first term of President Reagan, the freeze proposal focussed public anxieties about the nuclear arms race, and centred the public (but not necessarily the official) debate about the best way to reverse the increasing tensions in the superpower relationship.

Why did the freeze catch the public mood so quickly and successfully? There were several reasons, but perhaps one was central. In early 1980 there was a growing sense in the United States, fostered by Ronald Reagan's Presidential candidacy, that there were grave imbalances in the superpower holdings of nuclear weapons. Candidate, then President Reagan promised to remedy this situation by accelerating modernization programmes such as the MX missile, the Trident Submarine and the B-1 bomber. In doing so, he set the scene for the struggle between those who believed that stable deterrence, and successful negotiations with the Soviets, required increased American military strength, and those who believed that the superpowers "should stop the nuclear arms race."

There had been earlier proposals for various kinds of freezes. Largely unnoticed, President Johnson had proposed a freeze on strategic weapons in 1964. It was quickly rejected by the Soviets who, previewing and mirroring the debates of the 1980s, saw no benefit or security in a freeze that would lock in the overwhelming nuclear superiority that the

United States then possessed. In 1978 Prime Minister Trudeau proposed to "suffocate" the strategic arms race by imposing a ban on testing, and stopping the production of fissionable materials. Shortly before the *Call to Halt the Arms Race*, the American Friends Service Committee had suggested a unilateral American freeze, which had been poorly received precisely because of its unilateralism. What was new about the freeze proposed by Forsberg was the combination of timing and reasonableness. The timing was propitious because an increasingly large number of people showed a continuing, generalized anxiety about the threat of nuclear war. On the other hand, the perception that the United States was threatened by Soviet nuclear superiority was present but still disputed. A proposal which called for both sides to freeze, therefore, appeared an eminently sensible and understandable way to halt the forward momentum of the arms race as a necessary first step to the more complex negotiations involved in arms *reductions*.

In the two years following the *Call*, there is little doubt that President Reagan inadvertently fostered the movement by his policies on arms control. Although the Administration eventually developed a policy which called for deep cuts in strategic weapons, it was slow to do so. At the same time, unguarded comments by senior Administration figures suggested the feasibility of limited nuclear war, including nuclear warning shots in the event of a Soviet conventional attack on Western Europe. These attitudes fanned the mounting concern of the American and European publics. Support for the comprehensive freeze grew continuously: by early 1982, according to a New York Times poll, 72% of Americans favoured the freeze. In June 1982, an estimated 750,000 people, including many Canadians, took part in an anti-nuclear rally in New York City to mark the Second Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Disarmament (UNSSOD II). This groundswell of support found its proponents in Congress. Explaining their decision to introduce freeze legislation into Congress, Senators Kennedy and Hatfield wrote: "We were convinced that a new arms control initiative was needed to offer leadership in Congress and respond to the growing public concern."

In the two Congressional sessions that followed (1982 and 1983) a see-saw battle took place between the Congressional supporters and opponents of the freeze. In 1982, Senators Kennedy and Hatfield in the Senate, and Congressman Edward Markey in the House, introduced resolutions which typically called for "a mutual and verifiable freeze on the testing, production, and further deployment of nuclear warheads, missiles and other delivery systems." The Kennedy-Hatfield resolution made clear that this was the preamble to negotiations to *reduce* nuclear warheads and delivery systems. It also left it to the superpowers to "decide when and how" to achieve the freeze, thereby implying that the freeze itself would be the subject of a negotiation. This was a point of some consequence in the subsequent debate, since the quickest way to a freeze was a bilateral or simultaneous *declaration*, which in turn seemed to imply that issues such as verifiability did not need to be negotiated.

The counter-attack in the Senate came from Senators Jackson and Warner who, carrying the Administration's position, presented a resolution echoing the arms control policy finally announced by President Reagan in November 1981. This resolution suggested that the United States "should propose to the Soviet Union a long-term mutual and verifiable nuclear forces freeze at equal and sharply reduced levels." In this argument, therefore, the negotiations to reduce the level of strategic forces would *precede* the actual freeze. Such a proposal effectively contemplated a negotiation not dissimilar to those in SALT I and SALT II, but this time with deep arms *reductions*, not simply *ceilings*, as the objective.

The Congressional debates in 1982 produced mixed results, but mainly constituted a hard-won victory for the President. The Kennedy-Hatfield resolution lost in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee by a vote of 9 to 6, while, in a prolonged and tense debate in the House of Representatives, a resolution endorsing the position of the President passed by a vote of 204 to 202.

The next year, in 1983, similar resolutions were introduced with somewhat different results. Now with many more voices joining the debate in the press and the influential public, a version of the freeze proposal went forward in the House, and passed on May 4, 1983 by a wide margin. This resolution took a somewhat different form: it set down a series of objectives for the American negotiators at the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) which had opened in Geneva in June 1982. At the top of the list was the freeze:

> "the objective of negotiating an immediate, mutual and verifiable freeze, then pursuing the objective of negotiating immediate, mutual and verifiable reductions in nuclear weapons."

The affirmative vote in the House, however, was little more than a pyrrhic victory for the proponents of the freeze. Some thirty amendments were integrated into the resolution, the effect of which was to erode severely the apparent commitment to the freeze. To cite just two cases, one amendment noted that "Submarines are not delivery systems as used herein," thereby exempting the further deployment

of the Trident II from the freeze injunction. A second amendment stated that ". . . nothing in this resolution is intended to prevent the United States from carrying out its responsibilities under the 1979 NATO decision regarding intermediate-range nuclear forces," thereby allowing the planned deployment of the cruise and Pershing II missiles in Europe. In short, the freeze resolution passed, but it was far from a comprehensive freeze, and it was a declaration of the *objectives* that the Administration should pursue in the START negotiations, *not* an instruction to freeze.

One final stage in the American debate might be noted. After a meeting of the Freeze Campaign in late 1983, pro-freeze support shifted to a partial or 'quick' freeze. The essential idea was to concentrate on the weapons which allowed verification with a high degree of confidence such as the testing of new kinds of ballistic missiles. A resolution to this effect was introduced into Congress in early 1984, but was not passed. It will be remembered that by this time the United States was heavily committed to the deployment of new weapons, especially the MX ICBM, the Trident II SLBM, and the B-1 bomber. In a last, determined effort at the end of the first term of the Reagan Administration, freeze supporters attempted to obtain the endorsement of the Democratic candidates for the Presidency. Although they achieved some success, the Democratic candidate, Walter Mondale, was less than total in his support: while showing sympathy for the desire to control the escalation of the arms race, Mondale noted that he would not support a freeze that "we could not verify every day." Since no serious freeze proponent argued that this was either feasible or necessary, Mondale was clearly distancing himself from the advocates of a comprehensive freeze.

THE DEBATE AT THE UNITED NATIONS

The initial resolutions on a comprehensive freeze were presented in the First Committee of the General Assembly, and then in plenary session, in 1982. One resolution was sponsored by Mexico and Sweden, the other by India. These resolutions have been repeated since. In each case they passed by wide margins, but with most of the NATO countries voting against. At the 1983 Session the Soviet Union added its own resolution, also repeated in 1984 and 1985: it also passed by wide margins, but with somewhat more abstentions and votes against.

Of these resolutions, the Mexican/Swedish was the most explicit. It called for "an immediate nuclear arms freeze" to include:

- the complete cessation of the manufacture of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems
- a ban on all further deployment of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems
- the complete cessation of the production of fissionable materials for weapons purposes

In contrast to the Congressional resolutions, the Mexican/Swedish resolution suggested that the freeze would be accomplished by declaration: the superpowers, either jointly or separately, would declare the freeze to have started, and, in the five-year period contemplated, other nuclear powers were expected to join so that the freeze could be extended indefinitely.

The resolution also called for "all relevant measures of verification," and specifically referred to the procedures used in the SALT I and SALT II Treaties, and to the measures contemplated in the unsuccessful trilateral negotiations in Geneva among the US, USSR and UK for a Comprehensive Test Ban (CTB).

The Indian resolution, although less explicit than the Mexican/Swedish one, and emphasizing somewhat different aspects, conveyed essentially the same proposals. At first sight so did the Soviet resolution. The Soviet phrasing, however, is slightly less clear, and some analysts have suggested that there are sufficient loopholes in the wording to allow the claim that existing Soviet missiles — stockpiled but not deployed — would be permissible under the Soviet resolution, while the American INF deployments in Europe (the cruise and Pershing II missiles) would have been prohibited. The Soviet resolution also implied that the freeze would be started with a bilateral declaration rather than a negotiation. Finally, the Soviet resolution spoke of 'appropriate verification,' which, in subsequent debate, was explained by the Soviet spokesman as "methods of verification similar to those adopted in previous arms limitation agreements."

The UN debates on these resolutions were characterized not by a concern about adequate verification and an improved climate for further arms control negotiations — but by a concern with the balance of forces. On the one hand, the neutral and non-aligned states emphasized the frightening size of the nuclear arsenals, and the prospects that the arms race would eventually lead to annihilation. Echoing the movement in the United States, the Mexican/Swedish resolution and accompanying statements were essentially a call to halt the arms race. The Soviet Union and its allies emphasized that the time was propitious for a freeze, since, in the Soviet statement, "the present approximate parity of nuclear and conventional capabilities" meant that a freeze would not affect the security of either superpower or, by extension, their allies.

It was precisely on this issue that the lines were drawn in the UN debates. The US and the West Europeans rejected the claim that there was parity. The argument was made that a freeze would codify the existing imbalance, prevent NATO from redressing that imbalance, and eliminate any incentive for the Soviet Union to remove the threat posed by the SS-20's to Western Europe. The Belgian spokesman, for example, observed at the 1984 session that the freeze could not be accepted "especially when one country holds a monopoly on a particularly destructive type of weapon which poses a threat to my country's security." The West German statement noted that Soviet nuclear and conventional forces had reached new heights "precisely during the years in which [it] has made the freeze proposal one of the main battlehorses of its widely publicized policies."

The outcome of each UN debate, therefore, was that, although the freeze votes passed by a wide margin, they were opposed by most of the NATO partners with the exceptions normally of Denmark, Iceland and Greece and occasionally of the Netherlands, Norway and Spain. Moreover, although it was understandable that general debates would not cover the technical questions of verification, it was notable that little or no effort was made to explore the question of the balance of nuclear forces. It was not the 'window of vulnerability' (which had so exercised President Reagan in 1981) that was said to be the source of the imbalance, but, simply put, the Soviet deployment of the SS-20's in Europe.

A second argument made by the United States tied the problems of verification to the utility of the comprehensive freeze as a timely palliative to the arms race. The proponents of a comprehensive freeze had never argued that the freeze was an end in itself, but rather a necessary first step to negotiations aimed at the *reduction* of nuclear arsenals. Such a first step is most plausible if it can be done, for example, as the Mexican/Swedish and Indian resolutions required, by a declaratory act. Emphasizing the complexity of the verification procedures which would need to be in place before the freeze was declared, the United States argued that a freeze would be "every bit as difficult to negotiate as arms reductions themselves; indeed, such a complete ban on production, development and deployment of new systems could prove even more difficult than complex negotiations on the reduction of arms. . ." This argument tends to be self-fulfilling and is taken up in the next section.

One final note on the UN debates deserves attention. Australia and New Zealand, who are formally allied to the United States through the ANZUS pact, both voted *against* the freeze resolutions in 1982: in 1983 New Zealand voted against, and Australia abstained; in 1984 Australia voted in *favour*, and New Zealand abstained; in 1985 both countries voted in favour. In the Australian explanation of vote, an attempt was made to support "the broad aspirations manifest in the freeze proposals." At the same time, the Australian Government insisted that "verification, mutuality and balance" were essential elements of a freeze, and pre-conditions to "resolving the central issue of the deployment of intermediate-range nuclear forces in Europe." Australia, therefore, supported the principle of the freeze, but indicated that it should not take place before the resolution of the problems indicated. Although there is in this position an element of having one's cake and eating it, the Australians did effectively register their serious misgivings about current trends in nuclear weapons developments, and did not exempt the United States from their skepticism. Effectively, this distanced them from the Canadian government, for example, which expressed no such misgivings in any of its UN statements.

Canada voted against the comprehensive freeze proposals at the United Nations. In the explanation of vote at the 1983 Assembly, the Canadian delegate recognized "the important symbolic value in the freeze concept as an expression of the desire of mankind to be free from the fear of nuclear war" but also noted: "[Canada] wants significant, balanced and verifiable reductions in the level of nuclear arms in the world . . . mere declarations of a freeze are not a meaningful response to this danger . . . Canada wants the present levels reduced by the immediate unconditional resumption of negotiations on reductions." Although many Canadian policies could be construed as supporting partial freezes, perhaps the clearest and most consistent Canadian position has been that in support of a Comprehensive Test Ban (CTB). This support was reaffirmed by Mr. Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs, at the 40th Session of the General Assembly in September 1985:

> ". . . for Canada, the achievement of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty continues to be a fundamental and abiding objective. Our aim is to stop all nuclear testing."

CENTRAL ISSUES IN THE FREEZE DEBATE

The proposals for a comprehensive freeze were above all an attempt to administer a psychological and political jolt to the protagonists in the arms race, and to the complex, even arcane processes of the arms control debates. But beyond this, the freeze required for its success acceptance of its reasonable-

ness, and the prospect of early implementation. The longer the debate about the freeze continued, the more it looked like the 'traditional' arms control debates it was supposed to circumvent, and the less like a dramatic and creative step forward. In fact, the critics of the freeze disputed both its simplicity and its soundness. It is therefore salutary to note that, perhaps as the homage paid to virtue, the counter-proposals to the freeze, and indeed, President Reagan's official position, also supported the *principle* of the freeze — though at a later point, and after other major arms control negotiations had taken place. The comprehensive freeze, in other words, was pushed off into a distant and indeterminate future.

The doubts and opposition to the freeze can be classified under the following headings:

- concern about the force 'imbalance'
- challenges to verifiability
- the problem of negotiability

1) The Force Imbalance

At the time the *Call to Halt the Arms Race* began to gather steam, the American Administration was heavily involved on two fronts in major new weapons programmes. The first part was strategic weapons, where support was given to the B-1 Bomber, the Trident submarine and the MX ICBM. The second front was the INF deployments of ground launched cruise missiles (GLCMs) and the Pershing II in Europe. These weapons — a response to the Soviet deployment of the SS-20 — had been agreed to at the NATO Council meeting of December 1979, but only after a difficult and delicate diplomatic struggle within NATO.

Was there a force imbalance at the strategic level which made the MX deployment a prerequisite to any freeze on strategic missile deployments? The Reagan Administration clearly believed so, arguing that there was a 'window of vulnerability' created by the imbalance between Soviet land-based ICBM forces and American land-based ICBMs. Repeated studies since the initial Reagan claim, including the authoritative study requested by the President (the Scowcroft Commission), have recognized a Soviet advantage in land-based ICBMs but not to a degree which was obviously destabilizing. (It is the other way around in other strategic systems, especially sea-based systems). The Scowcroft Commission nevertheless recommended deployment of the MX to help restore a balance in land-based ICBMs, while other studies have, with strong evidence, argued that no such deployment was necessary. There are two points to be drawn from this. The first is that, freeze or not, a major weapons system in an advanced stage of development (and therefore with much money committed to it) is in itself a serious difficulty to any freeze proposal because there is enormous momentum towards deployment. The second point is that the *strategic* force imbalance was sufficiently disputed that it tended *not* to be cited as a powerful argument against the freeze. As a consequence, emphasis was placed increasingly on the European theatre force imbalance, as the debates at the United Nations demonstrated.

As for the European force imbalance, the vehemence of the West European states has already been noted. Was there a force imbalance in Europe? To illustrate the extraordinary difficulties in providing an answer, the following table reproduces the separate assessments of the United States and the Soviet Union at the Geneva talks.

TABLE 1 1981 INF Balance: US and Soviet Views

U.S. COUNT

U.S.		Soviet	
Missiles	0	SS-20 missiles	250
F-111 fighter-bombers	164	SS-4s and SS-5s	350
F-4s	265	SS-12s and SS-22s	100
A-6s and A-7s	68	SS-N-5s	30
FB-111s (in U.S. for use in Europe)	63	TU-26 Backfire bombers	45
		TU-16 Badgers and TU-22 Blinders	350
		SU-17, SU-24, and MIG-27 fighter-bombers	2,700
TOTAL	**560**		**3,825**

SOVIET COUNT

Western		Soviet	
U.S.		Land-based missiles (SS-20s, SS-4s, SS-5s)	496
Fighter-bombers (F-111s, F-4s, A-6s, A-7s, FB-111s)	555	Submarine missiles (SS-N-5s)	18
Pershing IA missiles	108	Medium-range bombers (Backfires, Badgers, Blinders)	461
British			
Polaris missiles	64		
Vulcan bombers	56		
French			
Land-based intermediate-range ballistic missiles	18		
Submarine missiles	80		
Mirage 4 bombers	33		
West German			
Pershing IA missiles	72		
TOTAL	**986**		**975**

SOURCE: *The New York Times*, November 30, 1981, p. A12.

Clearly, the Americans and Europeans saw a fearful imbalance, the Soviets none at all. How can the differences be accounted for? It is impossible here to do justice to the complexity of that debate, but one or two points from the table may suffice to illustrate the obstacles faced by the proponents of a comprehensive freeze. First, it will be noted that the Soviets counted in the British and French nuclear forces while the Americans did not. Without the British and French forces, there is undoubtedly an imbalance. Inadvertently, therefore, but as in many other instances, the proposal for a comprehensive freeze bumped into a long-standing dispute in which the parties are unlikely to change their position, or to have it changed for them, in order to comply with a comprehensive freeze proposal.

Second, the discrepancy about the number of airplanes and missiles in the two sets of figures illustrates one of the serious weaknesses in arms control counting techniques. The test firing and actual deployment of long range missiles can be ascertained with a very high degree of confidence. Moreover, through the SALT I and SALT II processes in matters concerning strategic weapons, the superpowers have acquired considerable experience in dealing with each other about these numbers, so that a basis of procedural agreement and understanding exists. Such is not the case with theatre nuclear weapons: they are inherently more difficult to count, their operational task may not be obvious (they may in any case be multi-tasked), and they may be dual capable: that is, able to carry both conventional and nuclear weapons. Although there are sophisticated and ingenious proposals for techniques which would overcome these obstacles, the lesson of Table 1 is that this could not be done without complicated negotiations.

2) Verification

It is commonly assumed that the Soviets have no difficulty with verification of American nuclear force deployments because of the open nature of American society. Although this may not be entirely true, it is the case that verification is essentially a 'western' preoccupation. Verification is generally thought to be a technical question, as indeed it is, but it also has political and perhaps perceptual aspects which are worthy of note.

Even in technical terms, however, where one might suppose that disinterested scientists could agree about the objective evidence, verification of a comprehensive freeze has been a subject of enormous debate. Many technical experts who support the freeze do not suggest that verification could ever be complete, but only that the margin of error can be sufficiently low, and the consequences sufficiently unimportant, that existing verification capabilities are adequate to allow each superpower *independently* to observe compliance with a comprehensive freeze. The critics dispute this claim; not only do they argue that the margin of error is significant, but also that there are certain areas of the freeze in which verification is highly problematic. In general, it is accepted that there is high confidence in the national technical verification of the testing and deployment of ballistic missiles. Until the Reagan Administration declared its position to be otherwise, there was a general acceptance of the verifiability of a comprehensive ban on nuclear weapons testing (CTB). There is somewhat less consensus about the verifiability of a ban on the *production* of delivery vehicles, and less still on the production of nuclear warheads and of weapons grade nuclear materials.

It is also generally agreed that detection of violations is more easily achieved if there is a complete ban on all activity. The contentious nature of verification, however, is considerably more complicated if it is allowed, as some major proponents of the freeze have now done, that some activity must continue for the replacement of worn-out parts, of malfunctioning systems, and of some critical elements in the manufacture of nuclear weapons, especially tritium, which degrade quickly over time. There is the further problem of determining whether dual-capable systems are to be included, for if they are not, then the temptation might be great to improve these systems as compensation for other systems frozen. The inescapable conclusion is that there are sufficient complexities involved in verification to sustain a prolonged negotiation.

Such a negotiation seems more likely if, in addition to the range of problems which are technical in nature, certain other aspects of the verification issue are recognized. First, it is difficult to resist the thought that problems of verification may be used to obscure a pre-determination to develop or deploy a new system. Reference has been made above to the inherent difficulties which were involved with the MX or the Pershing II missile systems.

Second, at least in the American case, there is a perceptual difficulty stemming from the distrust, at both official and public levels, of Soviet leaders and the Soviet system. The greater the belief that the Soviets will cheat and have malign intentions, the more compulsive the search for complete verification. Hence recent charges by Washington about Soviet non-compliance with the ABM Treaty and SALT II accords have reinforced the insistence on foolproof verification arrangements. The conundrum posed by this perceptual progression is well illustrated by the observation of an American verification specialist, Amron Katz, who argued with

dubious logic that "we have never found anything that the Soviets successfully hid." Behind these disputes, however, is a fundamental dilemma for freeze proponents: if a comprehensive freeze were declared, and if suspicion and recrimination began to mount about alleged violations, would the freeze have produced more or less stability?

In sum, as the freeze debate continued, one issue became increasingly clear: a comprehensive freeze would not or could not be implemented by joint or coincidental declaration. As the implications of this became obvious, individuals who were otherwise sympathetic to the substance and the intent began to modify their position. The late Herbert Scoville, then president of the Washington-based Arms Control Association summarized the point:

> "Arrangements for stopping in a single agreement all nuclear weapons programs, including delivery vehicles would be very complicated and almost certainly take so long to negotiate that the arms race would have gotten still further out of control before such a total freeze could, if ever, be put into effect. However, it should be possible to select certain programs for priority effort giving due attention to how easily they can be defined, how well they can be verified, and how critical it is to stop them quickly."

In suggesting that the solution to the problems of the comprehensive freeze was to select the parts which were amenable to quick freezing, the Scoville comment points to an increasing number of arms control supporters who, intentionally or otherwise, have tried to absorb the comprehensive freeze proposal into traditional arms control approaches. Ironically, these are precisely the approaches from which the freeze proposal was intended to break away. Nevertheless, selective or partial freezes have begun to command more attention than the comprehensive approach, even though highly selective freezes, such as a ban on the testing of anti-satellite weapons, a ban on maneuvrable re-entry vehicles, on long-range sea-launched cruise missiles have to date proved no more conducive to negotiation than the comprehensive freeze itself. Even if one or two were to be successful, however, they would hardly constitute the blow to the arms race that the *Call to Halt the Arms Race* had sought.

CONCLUSIONS

The comprehensive freeze proposals presented at the UN and adopted by overwhelming majorities, despite the opposition of the United States and its major allies, are unlikely to be implemented in their present form. What should be drawn from this experience?

First, there are no easy steps that can halt the arms race. In the case of the freeze, a combination of technical and political intricacy has gradually eroded the freshness of the proposal, however much it may still be a long-term objective.

Second, if only in defeat, the freeze movement demonstrated the power of the political process, suggesting that sustained pressure based on popular support can force arms control issues onto the political agenda.

Third, if public interest and pressure require a compelling focus such as the freeze, the obvious danger is that, without such a focus, public interest in the dangers of nuclear war will wane. Is it possible for public interest to be sustained over a long period without dramatic initiatives, but with close attention to pragmatic proposals and the performance record of political leaders? There, perhaps, is the real challenge for the thoughtful and attentive public who did so much to foster the debate about the comprehensive freeze.

APPENDIX

The text of the Mexican/Swedish Freeze Resolution, 40/151C, at the UN, 1985, adopted by a vote of 131-10-8:*

The General Assembly

Recalling that in the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, the first special session devoted to disarmament, adopted in 1978 and unanimously and categorically reaffirmed in 1982 during the twelfth special session of the General Assembly, its second special session devoted to disarmament, the Assembly expressed deep concern over the threat to the very survival of mankind posed by the existence of nuclear weapons and the continuing arms race,

Recalling also that, on those occasions, it pointed out that existing arsenals of nuclear weapons are more than sufficient to destroy all life on earth and stressed that mankind is therefore confronted with a choice: halt the arms race and proceed to disarmament or face annihilation,

Noting that at the Seventh Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held at New Delhi in March 1983 and at the Eighth Conference of Foreign Ministers of Non-Aligned Countries held at Luanda, People's Republic of Angola, in September 1985, it was declared that the renewed escalation in the nuclear-arms race, both in its quantitative and qualitative dimensions, as well as reliance on doctrines of nuclear deterrence, has heightened the risk of the outbreak of nuclear war and led to greater insecurity and instability in international relations,

*In an explanation of vote, the delegate from the Federal Republic of Germany indicated that although the FRG had abstained, it had intended to vote 'no.'

Bearing in mind that in their Joint Declaration, issued on 22 May, 1984, the Heads of State or Government of six Member States of the United Nations, coming from five different continents, urged the nuclear-weapon States "as a necessary first step . . . to halt all testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems" and that in the Delhi Declaration of 28 January 1985 they reiterated: "A halt to the nuclear arms race is at the present moment imperative. Only thus can it be ensured that nuclear arsenals do not grow while negotiations proceed.",

Believing that it is a matter of the utmost urgency to stop any further increase in the awesome arsenals of the two major nuclear-weapon States, which already have ample retaliatory power and a frightening overkill capacity,

Welcoming the start of negotiations between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America on a complex of questions concerning space and nuclear arms — both strategic and intermediate-range — with all these questions considered and resolved in their interrelationship,

Considering that a nuclear-arms freeze, while not an end in itself, would constitute the most effective first step to prevent the continued increase and qualitative improvement of existing nuclear weaponry during the period when the negotiations would take place,

Firmly convinced that at present the conditions are most propitious for such a freeze, since the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America are now equivalent in nuclear military power and it seems evident that there exists between them an overall rough parity,

Conscious that the application of the systems of surveillance, verification and control already agreed upon in some previous cases would be sufficient to provide a reasonable guarantee of faithful compliance with the undertakings derived from the freeze,

Convinced that it would be to the benefit of all other States possessing nuclear weapons to follow the example of the two major nuclear-weapon States,

1. *Urges once more* the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America, as the two major nuclear-weapon States, to proclaim, either through simultaneous unilateral declarations or through a joint declaration, an immediate nuclear-arms freeze, which would be a first step towards the comprehensive programme of disarmament and whose structure and scope would be the following:

(a) It would embrace:

(i) A comprehensive test ban of nuclear weapons and of their delivery vehicles;

(ii) The complete cessation of the manufacture of nuclear weapons and of their delivery vehicles;

(iii) A ban on all further deployment of nuclear weapons and of their delivery vehicles;

(iv) The complete cessation of the production of fissionable material for weapons purposes;

(b) It would be subject to appropriate measures and procedures of verification, such as those which have already been agreed by the parties in the case of the SALT I and SALT II treaties, and those agreed upon in principle by them during the preparatory trilateral negotiations on the comprehensive test ban held at Geneva;

(c) It would be of an initial five-year duration, subject to prolongation when other nuclear-weapon States join in such a freeze, as the General Assembly urges them to do;

2. *Requests* the above-mentioned two major nuclear-weapon states to submit a joint report or two separate reports to the General Assembly, prior to the opening of its forty-first session, on the implementation of the present resolution;

3. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its forty-first session an item entitled "Implementation of General Assembly resolution 40/. . . on a nuclear-arms freeze".

FURTHER READING

Cole, P.M. and W.J. Taylor (eds.), *The Nuclear Freeze Debate: Arms Control Issues for the 80's*, Boulder CO, Westview Press, 1983.

Forsberg, Randall, "A Bilateral Nuclear-Weapons Freeze," *Scientific American*, November 1982.

Forsberg, Randall, *Call to Halt the Nuclear Arms Race*, Institute for Defense and Disarmament Studies, 1982.

Garfinkle, A.M., *The Politics of the Nuclear Freeze*, Philadelphia, Foreign Policy Research Institute, 1984.

Senators Kennedy and Hatfield, *Freeze! How You Can Help Prevent Nuclear War*, New York, Bantam Books, 1982.

Paine, C. and Halperin, D. (eds.), *Toward a Safer World*, Cambridge MA, Physicians for Social Responsibility, 1984.

Stoertz, H., "Monitoring a Nuclear Freeze," *International Security*, Spring 1984, pp. 91-110.

The Nuclear Weapons Freeze and Arms Control, Proceedings of a Symposium held at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, January 13-15, 1983, Cambridge MA, Centre for Science and International Affairs, J.F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

U.S. Department of State, *Arms Control and the Nuclear Freeze Proposal*, Washington, D.C., Bureau of Public Affairs, April 1982.

David Cox is the Director of Research at the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security. He is on leave from Queen's University where he is Professor of Political Studies.

This paper draws heavily on working papers prepared by Gilles Grondin of CIIPS, and Lawrence Hagen and Ronald Purver of the Canadian Centre for Arms Control and Disarmament. However, the views expressed in the paper are the sole responsibility of the author, and should not be taken to represent the views of the Institute and its Board.

Published by the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security. Additional copies are available from the Institute: 307 Gilmour Street, Ottawa, K2P 0P7.

Le présent exposé est également publié en français.